

Welcome to the first edition of AuSome News! Kathy Doody, PhD, Buffalo State University and Jana Mertz, MBA, The Arc Erie County New York created this newsletter to provide families with autism, sensory challenges and other neuro or physical differences with resources, tips & tricks and upcoming events that may be of interest to neurodiverse families in Western New York. Please note that the events and businesses included in this newsletter are listed as a convenience and you should contact them directly to see if there are any changes and/or if they meet your family's unique needs. If you have a recommendation or something you would like listed, please do not hesitate to contact Jana: jmertz@arceriecounty.org Enjoy!

TIPS & TRICKS (and Treats)

Halloween can be a fun or stressful holiday for individuals with sensory challenges. The different costumes, lights, sounds, people walking around, doorbells ringing are out of the ordinary and can be very overwhelming to individuals with autism. The following provides some tips and tricks to help prepare our families for Halloween.

TRICK OR TREAT/THANK YOU CARD

For individuals who are pre-verbal, a simple Trick or Treat/Thank You card may help your child participate in the festivities. Simply take a note card or piece of paper and write "Trick or Treat" on one side and "Thank You" on the other so the individual can ask for the treat and thank the giver. You could practice a few times with your child or maybe even let them practice with a nice neighbor to help them feel more comfortable.

TRICK OR
TREAT

THANK YOU!
Happy Halloween!

POPULAR GLUTEN FREE-CASEIN FREE TREATS



Many of our families follow gluten free and casein free ("gfcf") diets and these treat-focused holidays can be much less fun if a child eats something out of the ordinary. Families with allergies or sensitivities would be grateful if people could provide a non-candy alternative such as age and ability appropriate: stickers, spider rings, crayons, or little plastic animals/dinosaurs/action figures, glow sticks that are inexpensive at the dollar store. If you are interested in offering GFCF treats, here is a list from <https://allergyawesomeness.com/gluten-free-dairy-free-halloween-treats/>. *As always, make*

sure you review the ingredients before you buy them.

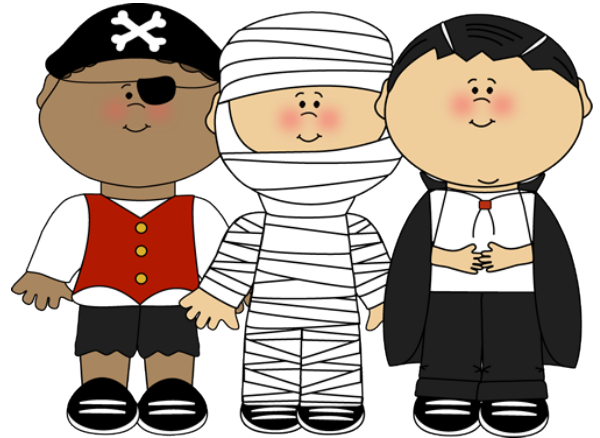
<https://www.spokin.com/gluten-free-halloween-candy-guide-2023>

Welch's Fruit Snacks (we added because it is a fan-favorite) Dum Dum Suckers Smarties (not Canadian)

Skittles Mike and Ikes Starbursts Life Saver Gummies Dots Swedish Fish Air Heads

<https://www.easterseals.com/midwest/who-we-are/news/helpful-hints-for-an.html>

- Help familiarize your child with what trick-or-treating may be like by practicing with a neighbor or at your own house. Rehearse going up to a door, knocking or ringing the doorbell, and asking for candy in whatever way your child can.
- Set your trick-or-treating route in advance. Keep your route close to home, in case you need to get back quickly. Avoid houses that may be too scary, gory, have excessive or flashing lights, or decorations that may make your child uncomfortable.
- Walk your route a few days before Halloween to help familiarize your child with it.
- Encourage your child to try his or her costume in advance. If something is uncomfortable, make modifications.
- Before trick-or-treating, discuss and set rules on how much candy your child can eat and when.
- Let your child stop when they want to, even if it's only a house or two in. Take a break or head home if your child wants to.
- Make sure your child has identifying information on them, such as a tag, card, or bracelet in case you get separated.
- Put something on your child such as a glow stick necklace to help spot him or her if your neighborhood gets crowded with trick-or-treaters.
- Don't underestimate your neighbors! Talk to them beforehand and explain the needs of your child.
- Remember, it's OK to stay at home. Create your own Halloween traditions that fit your family's needs, like a special movie night, baking Halloween-themed goodies, or even passing out candy.



A few resources, social narratives and videos to help prepare for Halloween

Autism Speaks: Preparing Children for Halloween Page—There are signs that you can print to say “This House is Autism Friendly” <https://www.autismspeaks.org/halloween>

Autism Speaks: All About Halloween Narrative <https://www.autismspeaks.org/templates-personalized-teaching-stories> (Halloween is last on list)

https://www.positivelyautism.com/downloads/socialstory_trickortreat.pdf **Narrative**

Video about Halloween & Trick or Treating <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlLxMeflJxs>

UPCOMING EVENTS

10/28—Little Frights with Lights 11 AM—3:30 PM Take your little ones trick or treating through Frightworld with the lights on and no monsters! Kids are \$16 and parents are free. Tickets Here: <https://frightworld.com/special-events/>

11/3 - Friday from 5:00—8:00 PM—SENSORY NIGHT: DINOFEEST at Buffalo Museum of Science. \$15 for non-members and FREE for members Limited exhibit sounds will provide a comfortable and fun evening of learning and exploration! Plus, all guests may enjoy hands-on sensory activities featuring dinosaur movement, dinosaur dig bins, arts and crafts, and so much more. Only 200 tickets available. <https://www.sciencebuff.org/event/sensory-night-dinofest/>

11/4 - Saturday from 8:00 —10:00 AM Get Air—A Special Time for You. First Saturday of each month. One parent free per jumper—\$16.99 Big Air and \$10.99 Little Air (under 46" tall) 3637 Union Road, Cheektowaga, NY 14225 (716) 205-3794 <https://getairsports.com/buffalo/events/special-needs/>

11/10—Friday 5:30—7:30 PM—Free! Au-Some Evening at Explore & More Children’s Museum provides a monthly, sensory friendly event with arts, activities and friends in a comfortable environment. Spaces are limited to keep it sensory friendly so reservations are required. For more information and to reserve your spot, please click here: <https://exploreandmore.org/au-some-evenings/>

11/13—Monday from 5-8 PM - Sensory Skate at Rainbow Rink in North Tonawanda - New Sensory Nights—Second Monday of the month. November 13th & December 11th—\$10 admission; Free skate rental, \$3 trainer. <https://rainbowrink.com/>

11/15 - Wednesday 6:30—7:30 PM - Group for Parents of Children with Autism with Kathy Doody, PhD and Jana Mertz—in person at Buffalo State University or virtual via zoom. For more information, please email: jmertz@arceriecounty.org.

11/18 Saturday 10:00 AM— Flix Stadium 10 in Lancaster, NY Sensory Friendly Family Film Series: Trolls Band Together. Welcoming and family-friendly environment with theatre lights on and the sound lowered. Tickets \$8.75 per person. <https://flix10.dipsontheatres.com/content/Sensory+Friendly+Family+Film+Series>

Community Collaborative Mission – November classes—include independence, cooking, social skills, literacy, auditory processing and more! For descriptions and registration: <https://www.collaborativecommunitymission.org/post/happy-november>

Fantastic Friends—Every month, Fantastic Friends hosts social events for children and adults with Autism, TBI, Down Syndrome, ADHD and other developmental / intellectual disabilities. For schedule, please email to get on distribution list: fantasticfriends@gmail.com

Gigi’s Playhouse - So many programs for individuals with Down Syndrome and accepting of all differing abilities! Here is a link for more information and calendar: <https://gigisplayhouse.org/buffalo/sfcalendar/>

Save the Date and Tickets:

12/10 Sunday at 10:00 am— Theatre of Youth Sensory Friendly Performance of “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown”. Lights are low and capacity is limited to create a welcome and accepting environment for families to move, sing and be themselves as they enjoy the theatre. Tickets are only \$5 for this performance with code: SENSORY23 <https://theatreofyouth.org/sensory-friendly/>

12/10 Sunday at 2:30 PM (pre-concert activities start at 1pm)—BPO “Jingle Bell Jam” for sensory seekers (lol). The kid concerts are a great way to experience the BPO and tickets are only \$7. Pre-concert activities that start at 1 pm. A family tradition of festive frivolity including a seasonal souvenir for kids! Santa helps conduct and leads the holiday sing-along. <https://bpo.my.salesforce-sites.com/ticket/#/instances/a0F5w0000cVLiiEAG>

SPOTLIGHT ON: The Autism Nature Trail (ANT) and Skating Athletes Bold at Heart (SABAH)

The Autism Nature Trail (ANT) in Letchworth Park



The Autism Nature Trail (The ANT) at Letchworth State Park is a first-of-its-kind experience in nature designed for visitors on the autism spectrum and with a range of abilities—appropriate and enjoyable for all abilities and ages. Located near the Humphrey Nature Center near the Castile entrance of Letchworth State Park, the ANT is a one-mile looped main trail with eight stations at various intervals, offering a range of experiences from quiet engagement to active exploration and adventure. Some of the stations include: Meadow Run & Climb, Music Circle, Sensory Station and all stations are meant to engage the senses through nature and natural materials. Many weekends are scheduled with programs that are listed on the ANT's website. Hours of operation are the same as Letchworth State Park. There is no cost to visit the ANT but the park charges a \$10 vehicle fee from May until the end of October. You can check with your local library to see if can sign out an Empire Pass which would cover entry. The ANT website is full of descriptions and details on how to prepare for your visit. <https://autismnaturetrail.com/> Tel: (585) 237-0270 x 2103 info@autismnaturetrail.com. Photos courtesy of ANT's website.

Skating Athletes Bold At Heart (SABAH)



For 47 years, SABAH has been dedicated to enriching the quality of life for individuals challenged by physical, cognitive, and/or emotional disability by providing education and therapeutic recreation, promoting fitness, and developing social and communication skills. Since its beginning of providing adaptive ice skating during the winter, SABAH has expanded and now offers six year round programs, on ice and on turf, for more than 830 participants with the support of more than 500 volunteers. SABAH's adaptive skate program is still open for registration and provides adaptive ice skating for individuals, of any age, challenged by disability. The program

is offered weekly, from October through March, at four locations throughout the Western New York region including the Bud Bakewell Riverside Rink, the Northtown Center at Amherst, the Hamburg Town Rink, and Niagara University's Dwyer Arena. Each session lasts approximately one hour and includes basic skating skills, games, some free time, and a lot of fun! Sabah provides all adaptive equipment including ice skates, helmets, walkers, and Rifton Walkers for non-weight bearing individuals. Each skater is paired with a one to one volunteer. The cost is \$250 per skater.

For registration or more information about SABAH's adaptive skating and other programs, please contact them: <https://sabahinc.org/> 716-362-9600 or email: SABAH@sabahinc.org . Photos courtesy of SABAH's website



Group for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

In person at Buffalo State or Virtual via Zoom. 6:30—7:30 pm on Wednesdays: November 15th and December 13th

For more information, please contact Jana Mertz : jmertz@arceriecounty.org.

Two Resources all Families Should Know:

Parent Network or Western New York—Provides FREE information, resources and one to one support on topics related to developmental disabilities. www.parentnetworkwny.org or 716-332-4170 or en Espanol: 716-449-6394

Mental Health Advocates of WNY: Provides essential non-clinical services that address the needs of individuals, families and communities living with mental illness. <https://mhawny.org/> (716) 886-1242 (M-F 8:30 AM—4:30 PM) To talk to someone immediately, call Crisis Services: 716-834-3131 or national suicide and crisis lifeline 988.